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Assembly California Legislature



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May 23, 2005

The Honorable Judy Chu, Chair
Assembly Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairwoman Chu:

As the elected representatives for the City of Folsom and the surrounding community, we strongly urge you to oppose AB 1715 (Nation) and to hold this bill on the Assembly Appropriations Suspense File.

This bill will, once again, place enormous pressure on the Department of Corrections to move California's Death Row facility to either Folsom State Prison or California State Prison, Sacramento, both located in Folsom. This possibility causes us significant concerns. A summary of those concerns follows below.

First, any effort to relocate Death Row at this point would be nonsensical. The state has budgeted \$220 million for a new facility at San Quentin. This project is currently in the planning stages and environmental reviews have been completed. It is likely that this newly constructed facility will save the state money in terms of operations and maintenance costs. Additionally, AB 1715 fails to consider the costs associated with the displacement of prisoners from any other facility or facilities that would be utilized for the housing of Death Row inmates. The Department of Corrections has identified significant costs associated with such displacements and the construction of new facilities.

While the state costs associated with relocating Death Row from San Quentin would be significant, the negative impacts that would be associated with a potential relocation of Death Row inmates to either of the two facilities in Folsom would be even more problematic.

Unlike remote prisons that are far removed from residential areas, Folsom State Prison and California State Prison Sacramento are located immediately adjacent to large residential areas in a rapidly growing urban setting. There is little or no excess right-of-way along the prison property frontage or at its entrance. Violent demonstrations or disturbances at the entrances into Folsom State Prison and California State Prison, Sacramento could easily spill over into the adjoining neighborhoods, greatly increasing the probability for serious personal injury and significant property damage.

The sole entrance into Folsom State Prison and California State Prison, Sacramento is off the only major thoroughfare providing key east/west traffic circulation for this northeast quadrant of the community. Closure of this critical roadway will effectively downgrade response

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capabilities of the City's public safety units. It will also isolate neighborhoods and limit access to critical police, fire and civic center facilities.

Additionally, the entrance to Folsom State Prison and California State Prison, Sacramento is located near Folsom Dam, the primary flood control facility for the Sacramento region. Demonstrators against capital punishment may target this facility to focus media attention. Any adverse actions that threaten the integrity of these flood control facilities would have severe and possibly catastrophic consequences for residences and businesses along the American River.


Recent executions at San Quentin have attracted between 300 and 400 protesters. The City of Folsom estimates that annual operating costs to handle such situations could easily exceed \$250,000. In addition, one-time costs including equipment purchases and training may surpass \$225,000. The City has not budgeted for these expenditures. Local funding for other programs would have to be redirected to address these costs. Levels of service for these other programs would be reduced.


It is also important to note that Folsom State Prison and California State Prison, Sacramento are the closest facilities to the State Capitol. This proximity would enhance the ability of protesters to target both the State Capitol and Folsom facilities. Protestors would benefit from the ability to impact two locations and from the ability to gain media exposure by using the State Capitol as a backdrop. Any additional protests at the State Capitol would necessitate additional efforts by the California Highway Patrol to protect the Capitol and the Governor's Office.

From our perspective, if all of the facts and issues involved were viewed comprehensively, it would be clear that the State of California and the Department of Corrections would be better served to proceed with the planned improvements to San Quentin.

Again, we urge you to oppose AB 1715 and hold this bill in the Appropriations Committee.

Sincerely,


ROGER NIELLO
Assemblyman, 5th District


DAVE COX
Senator, 1st District

cc: Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee